

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Red-capped Robin near Peel Inlet.—The Red-capped Robin (*Petroeca goodenovii*) is a rather uncommon autumn visitor to the forested area of the South-west and the known records from the neighbourhood of Perth have been summarised in my *Birds of the Swan River District* (1948, p. 38). Few observations have been made south of this district and therefore it is of interest to put on record the observation of a male bird in a paperbark swamp between Lake Mealup and the south shore of Peel Inlet on May 14, 1949. The bird was very wary and apparently on the move, as I obtained only one view of it and my companion, Mr. T. M. Smith, of Coolup, caught a second glimpse after a prolonged stalk, and saw an additional bird.

—D. L. SERVENTY, Nedlands.

Crested Terns and Silver Gulls nesting at Green Island, Rottnest.—On December 29, 1948 I visited Green Island, an islet connected to the south shore of Rottnest Island by a reef, over which one can wade at low tide. There I found a colony of Crested Terns, nesting in a compact group. The nesting season was apparently almost over as only about a dozen young birds not yet able to fly but able to run quite quickly, were on the island. The tern colony had had a high mortality rate as I found 31 dead young fledglings, no doubt killed by human agency, as all appeared to have been squashed. There were also three dead adult terns. All these appeared to have been dead for quite a while as they were dried out. About 70 adult Crested Terns were present on the islet.

In the Silver Gull colony only two nests contained eggs, one two eggs and the other one. Seven fledglings, not yet able to fly, were seen and there were about 50-60 vacant nests. Approximately 40 adult Silver Gulls were counted.

—DON REID, Wembley.

Discovery of *Nototherium* Remains at Gingin.—On May 1, 1949 a party from the Geology Department, University of Western Australia, while searching for marine Cretaceous fossils in the strata exposed in McIntyre's Gully, Gingin, located a portion of a large mammalian lower jaw containing two molars. The large size of these teeth and their shape and character, led to the belief that it was a jaw fragment of an extinct giant marsupial, either *Diprotodon* or *Nototherium*.

The specimen was handed to Mr. L. Glauert (Curator of the Western Australian Museum), who identified it as an incomplete left lower jaw of *Nototherium mitchelli* Owen, representing an adult with the last molar showing signs of wear. He added: "It is of interest to record that this is the first time that remains of *Nototherium* have been found anywhere in the State outside the Mammoth Cave, where remains were discovered in 1909. At that time they were thought to be bones of *Diprotodon*, a mistake that

was not corrected until teeth were unearthed" (see *Western Australian Naturalist*, vol. 1, No. 5, 1948, p. 100).

When the character of the find was realised a return to the site of the original discovery was planned. The trip was made on May 15 by a small party from the University and although the gully was searched thoroughly new specimens were only discovered in the original locality in the same facies. This is a soil containing weathered greensand and fragments of *Inoceramus*. It appears that the specimen was included in the soil through landslips and soil creep as it is impossible that the jaw is contemporaneous in age with the Lower Greensands against which it was found.

The relics found on the second visit included two phalanges, a complete and damaged vertebra and other indefinite fragments. In view of these findings it is not improbable that more fragments may be revealed in a thorough search and another visit is planned. Later a fuller account of the field occurrence will be presented.

—A. MAIN, Perth.

The Instincts of Argentine Ants.—Anyone with experience of Argentine Ants (*Iridomyrmex humilis*) is aware of the difficulty of exterminating them. The effect of various poison baits and other toxicants is so variable and inexplicable from our point of view, that there seems no rule to go by and one can only continue empiric experiments.

This is probably due to our ignorance of the physiology, instincts and social behaviour of the insects. In my own experience, arsenical bait placed in a tin on one trail was completely effective, while a similar tin of poison on another trail had no effect whatever; the ants walked over the lid, but did not enter the holes.

Seeking an explanation, the following hypothesis occurred to me. When the ants are travelling between the nest and a known source of food supply, they go straight ahead and ignore anything on the way. But when they are foraging, they wander about and will try anything edible they can find.

The following experience is interesting, but hard to explain. On Bassendean railway station, I had observed the ants continuously using a well-worn path for several months. One morning I had with me a dust gun loaded with a preparation of benzene hexachloride, and I puffed the powder along a yard or more of the trail, which caused the ants to disperse. The next morning, just 24 hours later, I carefully examined the trail and could not find a single ant anywhere near the treated portion. Naturally, I considered the remedy was completely successful. But while I was watching, one ant appeared and reached the trail at right angles. It turned and followed the worn path. In a few seconds, many ants came from all directions, and the trail was in full use again.

These questions arise: (1) Why did the effect of the toxicant last for 24 hours and then apparently cease suddenly? (2) Did